

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 DOE-15 SOE-02 /096 W
-----082800 130924Z /14

R 121159Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3776
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 1877

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SW
SUBJECT: FALLDIN DECIDES AGAINST RESIGNATION

REF: STOCKHOLM 1792

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: AFTER A WEEK OF SOUL-SEARCHING, CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER LEADERS OF THE CENTER PARTY AND INTERNAL FAMILY DISCUSSIONS, PM FALLDIN TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 11 THAT HE HAS DECIDED TO STAY IN OFFICE. HIS ANNOUNCEMENT THUS ENDED A BRIEF BUT SOMEWHAT BIZARRE INTERVAL IN THE ONGOING TRAVAILS OF SWEDEN'S FIRST NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN 44 YEARS.

2. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH STOCKHOLM DAILY DAGENS NYHETER ON MAY 6, THE MYSTICAL FALLDIN, REVEALING HIS FRUSTRATIONS AND APPARENTLY GROWING DISENCHANTMENT WITH SWEDISH MEDIA TREATMENT OF POLITICIANS, HAD SAID THE SUPPOSEDLY SATIRICAL ATTACK ON HIM IN AFTONBLADET LAST JANUARY (MADE WORSE BY HIS LOSING A LIBEL SUIT AGAINST THE LO-OWNED PAPER IN THE COURTS) WAS A CONTINUING SOURCE OF PROFOUND PAIN AND EMBARRASSMENT
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TO HIM AND HIS FAMILY (REFTEL). IN THE WAKE OF FALLDIN'S "BOMBHELL," MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMENTARY WAS EXPECTEDLY HEAVY AND PREDICTABLY SPLIT ALONG PARTY LINES. FORMER-PM OLOF PALME DECLARED THAT FALLDIN'S PUBLIC MUSINGS HAD ALREADY UNDERMINED WHATEVER CONFIDENCE WAS LEFT IN THE PM'S OFFICE AND THAT FALLDIN SHOULD RESIGN. OTHER SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC COMMENT WAS SIMILAR. IN THE MAIN, HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY

OF POLITICAL AND PRESS REACTION INDICATED CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY FOR FALLDIN'S PERSONAL "CRISIS" AND URGED HIM TO TAKE HEART AND REMAIN. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, FALLDIN MENTIONED THAT THESE OUTPOURINGS OF APPRECIATE HAD STRONGLY INFLUENCED HIS DECISION TO STAY IN OFFICE.

3. DAGENS NYHETER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PM'S DECISION TO CONTINUE ALSO MEANT THAT HE HAS DECIDED ONCE AND FOR ALL TO SEEK A REALISTIC COMPROMISE SOLUTION TO SWEDEN'S CONFUSED NUCLEAR POWER PROBLEM--WHICH REMAINS THE PRINCIPAL THREAT TO COALITION STABILITY. FALLDIN, WHO IS NOW PREPARING HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE CENTER PATY'S ANNUAL CONGRESS IN MID-JUNE, GAVE NO HINT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HIS PERSONAL OPPOSITION TO FURTHER NUCLEAR POWER CAPACITY HAD CHANGED ONE IOTA. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: DESPITE THE MANIFESTATIONS FROM CENTER PARTY SUPPORTERS AND OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY, THE EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT FALLDIN'S LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND ABILITIES HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGED BY THE EXPERIENCE. IN ADDITION TO THE INDECISIVENESS AND CURIOUS ALOOFNESS WHICH HAVE CHARACTERIZED HIS STEWARDSHIP OF GOVERNMENT SINCE OCTOBER 1976, ONE MUST NOW ADD A PERHAPS EXAGGERATED SENSITIVITY TO PUBLIC CRITICISM, UNUSUAL IN AN INDIVIDUAL SO LONG INVOLVED IN SWEDISH POLITICAL BATTLES. FALLDIN'S THIN-SKINNED REACTION
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TO SUCH MISERABLE ATTEMPTS AT SATIRE CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE STRENGTHENED HIS OWN POLITICAL HOLD OR PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE COALITION WHICH HE HEADS. END CONFIDENTIAL
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STOCKH01877
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780203-0647
Format: TEL
From: STOCKHOLM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780562/aaaacaqt.tel
Line Count: 98
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5d24969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STOCKHOLM 1792
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2701600
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FALLDIN DECIDES AGAINST RESIGNATION
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, SW, (FALLDIN, THORBJORN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5d24969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014